

# Citizens' Coalition protests Toxins in River



MAP OF THE SAN JACINTO TOXIC WASTE PITS as furnished by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the US EPA, show the confirmed North Impoundment Superfund Site, and the suspected South Impoundment site.

HOUSTON – Members of a group known as the San Jacinto River Coalition, as well as the TexansTogether organization, staged a demonstration last Wednesday, Dec. 18th to protest the inaction of parties involved in the clean-up of the toxic waste pits in the San Jacinto River near Channelview and Highlands.

These pits, which are the result of dumping of industrial waste from the papermaking process some 40 years ago, con-

tain dioxin, which is considered by some health experts to be the most deadly compound in existence. The dioxins have been leaking into the river water, and fish and blue crabs absorb them and make them deadly for human consumption, say the experts. The county has posted warning signs, but many fishermen ignore them.

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan has sued the companies that now are responsible for the cleanup. These are

Waste Management, successor to McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corp., and International Paper, which is the successor to Champion Paper Co. whose papermill generated the waste.

The demonstration was staged in front of the Waste Management offices in downtown Houston. The two companies say they are cooperating with authorities, but Ryan and the public say not fast enough. He seeks a permanent solution that would remove the toxins, but the TCEQ has not finalized an acceptable solution.

A temporary "cap" is over the pits on the north side of I-10, but its integrity has been questioned, especially during a possible flood that the Corps of Engineers says is possible. No action has been taken on possible waste pits and toxins on the south side of I-10, pending further tests and definition of the boundaries. This area is close to River Terrace Park in Channelview.

A trial has been set for September 2014, and County Assistant Attorney Rock Owens said that this potentially is the largest environmental penalty trial ever conducted in the United States. If the County wins, they will ask for \$25,000 per day for 38 or more years, a total of \$340 million dollars.

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